



---

---

**COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET**  
**MAJORITY CAUCUS**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**106th Congress — Washington, DC**

---

---



**EARLY WARNING TALKING POINTS**  
**ON ADMINISTRATION BUDGET PROPOSAL**  
**21st CENTURY LEARNING CENTERS**

---

---

**BACKGROUND**

In his budget for fiscal year 2001, the President is expected to present an expanded version of his 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program. He has proposed increasing the program's funding by \$547 million, more than a 120-percent increase over its current funding level of \$453 million.

21st Century Community Learning Centers, as authorized by Title X, Part I, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, are after-school, weekend, and summer programs that are set up by public schools or groups of public schools. The Centers receive 3-year grants to use public school buildings in rural and inner city communities to provide educational, recreational, cultural, health, and social services to various targeted community members. The program's authorization expired in fiscal year 1999.

**KEY POINTS**

- < After-school programs can be particularly helpful to disadvantaged children, but are promoted, managed, and funded most effectively at the State or local level. This program is not even focused on children.
  - < The Department of Education does not possess sufficient knowledge of the quality and participation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers to justify more than doubling the existing funding. The program's funding has grown from \$750,000 to \$453 million in the past 6 years, but no formal studies of the program have yet been conducted.
  - < Rather than focusing on providing children with a strong academic background and a safe learning environment, the law authorizing these Centers specifies that they provide the following: senior citizen programs; children's day care services; support and training for day care providers; parenting skills education programs;
- 
-

---

---

integrated education, health, social service, recreational, or cultural programs; summer and weekend school programs in conjunction with recreation programs; services for individuals who leave school before graduating from secondary school, regardless of the age of such individual; employment counseling, training and placement; nutrition and health programs; literacy education programs; expanded library service hours to serve community needs; telecommunications and technology programs for individuals of all ages; and services for individuals with disabilities.

The Administration has also indicated that the Centers should strive to reduce drugs and violence.

- < The President has been inconsistent in his support for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers. He requested no funds for the program in fiscal year 1996 and a rescission of the entire \$750,000 for fiscal year 1995. Again in fiscal year 1997, the President requested no funding for the Centers. The President argued that separate funding was not needed because: “The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended, authorizes local education agencies, individual schools, or consortia of schools to use up to 5 percent of the funds they receive under ESEA to establish and implement coordinated services projects that provide elementary and secondary school students and their families better access to social, health, and education services.” (Fiscal Year 1997 Department of Education budget request)
- < The President’s initiative is, again, creating a new program so that the Federal Government can expand its influence and control over local schools, an area that has traditionally been reserved to State and local school districts.

### **WASTE, FRAUD, ABUSE, AND MISMANAGEMENT**

- < The program duplicates existing Federal programs and, therefore, may not be the most efficient use of Federal resources. Similar programs include: the section of the ESEA that permits up to 5 percent of awarded funds to be used for coordinated services projects; safe and drug free schools; the Bilingual Education Act; and some Individuals with Disabilities Education Act programs. In addition, child care legislation funds some similar programs.
- < It is difficult to ensure program accountability, particularly given the tremendous growth in the program. The House Committee on Appropriations expressed concerns about the program’s accountability, saying the following:

“The Committee remains concerned that the Department has not identified specific, measurable standards consistent with the requirements of the Government

---

---

Performance and Results Act for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers. It is essential for the Department to develop specific measurable standards relating to the core services listed in the authorizing legislation and particularly focusing on academic and social preparation for school. Such data should include baseline data on the academic improvements and transfer of programmatic innovations and specific, measurable changes that are expected to occur as a result of proposed increased funding.” (Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Fiscal Year 1999 appropriations bill)

- < Although the Department of Education has indicated its intention to fund a four-year external evaluation of the program, there have not been any thorough empirical evaluations of its performance to date.

For this early warning document and other information on administration budget proposals, see the House Budget Committee’s web page at [www.house.gov/budget](http://www.house.gov/budget)